

Appl. No. 09/945,377

Reply to Office action of December 30, 2003

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claims 1-18 (canceled)

Claim 19 (currently amended): A knee brace, comprising:

an upper portion;

a lower portion;

a plurality of straps for securing said upper portion to a person's thigh and said lower portion to a person's calf;

medial and lateral hinges for pivotally coupling said upper and lower portions together; and

a hinge deflector adapted to be worn between the person's knee and said medial hinge, said hinge deflector having an inner side facing the knee and an outer side facing said medial hinge, said outer side being formed with a first projection ~~extending around a front edge of said medial hinge, said projection~~ having a curved surface shaped along a front edge of said hinge deflector, said curved surface sloping in a rearward direction from said inner side of said hinge deflector toward an outer side of said medial hinge for deflecting an object away from said medial hinge.

Claim 20 (canceled)

Claim 21 (previously presented): The brace of Claim 19, wherein said outer side of said hinge deflector is formed with a recess shaped for receiving at least a portion of said medial hinge.

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Claim 22 (currently amended): The brace of Claim 19, wherein said outer side of said hinge deflector further comprises a second projection extending away from the knee and around a rear edge of said medial hinge.

Claim 23 (currently amended): The brace of Claim 22, wherein said second projection is positioned for contacting said upper and lower portions of the knee brace for limiting rotational movement of said medial hinge during flexion of the person's knee.

Claim 24 (previously presented): The brace of Claim 19, wherein said hinge deflector is made of a molded plastic material.

Claim 25 (previously presented): The deflector of Claim 19, further comprising a plurality of ribs along said inner side of said hinge deflector for increasing the structural integrity of said hinge deflector.

Claim 26 (currently amended): A hinge deflector comprising a shell configured to be positioned between a person's knee and a medial hinge of a knee brace, said shell having an inner side shaped for placement along a medial portion of the person's ~~facing the~~ knee and an outer side facing said medial hinge, said outer side including a first projection adapted for extending around a front edge of the medial hinge, said first projection being formed with a curved surface ~~shaped~~ sloping in a rearward direction for deflecting an object away from the medial hinge.

Claim 27 (previously presented): The deflector of Claim 26, wherein said outer side of said shell further comprises a recess shaped for receiving a portion of the medial hinge.

Claim 28 (previously presented): The deflector of Claim 26, wherein said shell includes a plurality of openings for receiving fasteners to connect said shell to the knee brace.

Claim 29 (previously presented): The deflector of Claim 26, wherein said shell is made of a molded plastic material.

Claim 30 (previously presented): The deflector of Claim 26, wherein said outer side further comprises a second projection adapted to extend around a rear edge of the medial hinge, said second projection having a curved deflecting surface and being positioned to limit a range of motion of the medial hinge.

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Claim 31 (previously presented): The deflector of Claim 26, further comprising a plurality of ribs along said inner side for increasing the structural integrity of said shell.

Claim 32 (previously presented): The deflector of Claim 26, wherein said shell has a substantially elliptical shape.

Claim 33 (previously presented): The deflector of Claim 27, wherein said recess has a substantially elliptical shape.

Claim 34 (currently amended): A knee brace, comprising:

an upper portion;

a lower portion;

a plurality of straps for securing said upper portion to a person's thigh and said lower portion to a person's calf;

medial and lateral hinges for pivotally coupling said upper and lower portions together; and

a hinge deflector adapted to be worn between the person's knee and said medial hinge, said hinge deflector having ~~an~~ a contoured inner side ~~facing~~ configured for placement along a medial portion of the person's knee and an outer side facing said medial hinge, said outer side being formed with a recess for receiving at least a portion of said medial hinge and including a first projection positioned to extend around a front edge of said medial hinge, said projection having a curved surface shaped for deflecting an object away from said medial hinge.

Claim 35 (currently amended): The brace of Claim 34, wherein said outer side of said hinge deflector further comprises a second projection extending away from the knee and around a rear edge of said medial hinge, said second projection being positioned for contacting said upper and lower portions of the knee brace for limiting rotational movement of said medial hinge during flexion of the person's knee.

Claim 36 (previously presented): The brace of Claim 35, wherein said hinge deflector is made of a molded plastic material.